

Seeing Jesus in Acts 3

By John R. Gibson

Jesus, Name Above All Names is a beautiful song that utilizes a number of the different names given our Lord, all with the intent to make us think about the multifaceted nature, character, and work of our Lord. While this article will not analyze that marvelous hymn, I do want us to use a similar approach as we look at the way Acts 3 identifies Jesus in a number of different ways.

Jesus Christ of Nazareth. 3:6

Jesus was the name given Him at birth and this was done in accordance with the instructions given Mary by Gabriel (Luke 1:31). While it was Mary who was first told that His name would be Jesus, we learn more about the significance of the name when we read of an angel telling Joseph, “You shall call His Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.” This name, which was the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew for Joshua, is said in the margin to be literally “Savior.” Though many in the first-century sought for one to deliver them from the power of Rome and many today want to be delivered from their earthly troubles, we must see that He came to save people “from their sins.” Do we understand that we can be poor, politically oppressed, sick, or suffering in other ways, but if are delivered from our sins, we have received that which means most. Sin will keep us from God (Isa. 59:1-2) and lead to spiritual death (Rom. 6:23), so let us rejoice that God has sent Jesus, i.e. the Savior.

And He is the Christ, i.e. the Messiah who fulfilled the Old Testament prophecies. When we see Jesus we need to see Him as the Anointed One who brings the great blessings found in passages like Isaiah 2, 9, 11, 12, 53, 55; Ezekiel 34-37; Joel 2; Amos 9; Zechariah 2, 6, 13; et al. In Him we have peace, security, salvation, mercy, showers of blessings, joy, cause for thanksgiving, the perfect king, an interceding priest, fellowship with God, etc. The prophets are rich with promises of Messianic blessings and those are found in Jesus.

While we may have thought about the words Jesus Christ, how often have we stopped to think about the phrase “of Nazareth?” One reason for calling Him Jesus of Nazareth was to distinguish Him from others who have might have had the same name, a common one in the first century (cf. Acts 13:6). However, there is something else worth thinking about. Saying that He was of Nazareth was saying He grew up as a child and then lived as a man in a small village of Galilee. While He was the Son of God, it is also clear that He was also fully human and the words of Nazareth should help us more fully appreciate Heb. 4:14-16 and its assertion that He knows what it is like to be tempted as we are.

God’s Servant

When we see “His Servant Jesus” in 3:13, 26, our first thought might of the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 who died for our sins that He might bring us healing. We should never lose sight of the fact that it is only through God’s “righteous Servant” that we can be justified (Isa. 53:11). But when we think of Jesus as the Servant, should we not also think of His dedication to doing the will of the Father? In life and in death He was guided by this one principle, “Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God” (Heb. 10:9). In doing God’s will He became our atoning sacrifice, but He also set an example for us that we might

have that same dedication (Matt. 7:21; 1 Pet. 2:21).

Prophet

In 3:22-23 Jesus is said to be the fulfillment of the promise made that a Prophet like Moses would arise and while several of the descriptive names or designations given our Lord point to the grace of God, this one points to a concept many have failed to see. God's grace and mercy offer forgiveness to the undeserving, but not the disobedient. "The Lord your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people." Are we listening to the Prophet? In all things? Jesus came to bless people by turning them from their iniquities (3:26), so are we heeding the words of the Prophet and turning from our sins to an absolute, from-the-heart commitment to God's will?

Seed of Abraham

"Saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed' " (3:25). Approximately 2,000 years earlier the Lord had promised Abraham a descendant who would bless all nations and we rejoice that Jesus is that Seed (Gal. 3:16). While Peter in Acts 3 was addressing those who shared with Jesus a physical descent from Abraham, as Gentiles we would be those who were once "aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12). Do we appreciate the wonders of being in the mind of God for all those years? As we are reading through the Old Testament history, let's do so with an awareness that the Lord is working toward the Seed of Abraham coming as our Savior! The world may not take much notice of us, but our God worked His providence through the centuries to bring His blessings to us. And before leaving the Seed of Abraham, shouldn't we also think about how this plan was for all nations? When we look around our communities, schools, workplaces, etc., we need to see people who belong to "all the families of the earth" and were intended to receive the blessing of the Seed of Abraham. Let's all strive to do a better job of sharing this good news.

We could also have considered the Holy One and the Just of 3:14, but I trust we have seen enough to more fully appreciate Jesus, Name Above All Names. Let's listen to the Prophet and be servants of God so that we might receive the great blessings the multifaceted Jesus offers.

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